DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 406 750 EA 028 318

AUTHOR Court, Marian R.
TITLE Challenging Managerialism: Women Establishing a Co-Principalship in a Primary School.
PUB DATE Mar 97
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, March 24-28, 1997).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Accountability; *Administrator Role; Decentralization; Elementary Education; Females; Foreign Countries; Leadership Qualities; *Participative Decision Making; *Principals; *School Based Management; *Women Administrators
IDENTIFIERS *New Zealand

ABSTRACT

In New Zealand the rhetoric of educational administration reform has claimed that local school management will lead to improvement in the areas of efficiency, effectiveness, and equity. In addition, the role of the school principal has been a significant site of contest and struggle. This paper presents findings of a ongoing ethnographic study that examined women's initiations of collaborative coprincipalships in New Zealand primary schools. The paper describes how three female coprincipals in one school handled dilemmas within the contradictory environment of "centralised decentralisation." Issues of accountability emerged as significant as the three principals and their board radically reconstructed traditional and managerial notions of the principalship. Data were obtained through interviews with principals, board chairpersons, board members, teaching and support staff, parents, students, and representatives of the Ministry of Education, the School Trustees Association, and the primary teachers union. Observation and document analysis were also conducted. The school's co-principalship was so successful that when two principals left in 1996, the board decided not to revert to a single partnership. In most cases the coprincipal model in primary schools in Aotearoa and New Zealand has been taken up mostly by women administrators, rather than by men. However, the finding does not lend itself to an essentialist view of women's leadership qualities, which asserts that all women are collaborative. Mutually supportive partnerships were developed between the coprincipals and male chairpersons or male board members. (Contains 83 references.) (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 406 750

Challenging Managerialism: Women Establishing a Co-Principalship in a Primary School

A paper for presentation in the Symposium:

Seven Years On: School-Site Management in Aotearoa/New Zealand

at the 1997 AERA Annual Meeting
Chicago, Il, March 24 -28, 1997.

Marian R. Court

Senior Lecturer
Department of Policy Studies in Education
Massey University College of Education
Palmerston North
New Zealand

Phone 06 350 4534
Fax: 06 350 5635
Email:M.R.Court@massey.ac.nz

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
M Court
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

Abstract

How are women faring within the restructured educational environment, where professional leadership is being increasingly beleaguered by market and managerial forces? This paper draws on an on-going ethnographic study of primary school women's initiations of collaborative co-principalships to discuss some of the dilemmas that have been encountered within the contradictory environment of 'centralised decentralisation' (Blackmore 1995). Issues of accountability have emerged as significant as, in one school, the women and their board have been radically reconstructing traditional and managerial notions of 'the Principal'. The paper includes some reflections on related gender issues.

Introduction: Restructuring Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand

In this country, as elsewhere in the world, the rhetoric of educational administration reform has claimed that school improvement in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and equity, will be achieved through local school management. Review and policy documents (Picot 1988, Lange 1988) were framed within arguments that devolved management would give institutions increased control over both resources and educational objectives (within national guidelines set by the state). An assumption underpinning these arguments was that self-interested provider capture by teachers and educational professionals had led to inefficiencies and the lowering of educational standards (Treasury 1987). A main plank of the reformers' discourse was a requirement for increased partnership between school professionals and their communities: this, it was argued, would enable schools to better reflect and meet local needs (Lange 1988).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EA028318

Such claims cohere with challenges to traditional top down authority and arguments for shifts to participatory decision making from a wide range of parties. These have included educational evaluators (OECD 1991), academics (Ramsay et al 1991), unionists (Hill 1992, Capper 1994) and feminists (Blackmore 1989, Davies 1990)[1]. However, despite the statement of Dr. Ballard (the Education Director General, appointed in 1989 to oversee the reform implementation) that there would be "a significant transfer of power to school boards" (1989), political agendas were not to devolve power, but rather responsibility for the implementation of centrally decided policies. As Codd early on pointed out, "the political forces behind the restructuring have been strongly inbued with an ideology of hierarchical managerialism" (Codd 1993a:157), and driven by an economically rationalist market view of education (Codd 1990, Lauder et al 1994, Gordon 1994a, 1995, Boston et al 1996, O'Neill 1996a).

From the beginning of the restructuring, the role of the school principal has been a significant site of contest and struggle (Lough 1990, Codd 1990, Wylie 1995, Education Review Office 1996, Robertson 1997, Strachan 1997). Seven years on, political attempts to 'reconstruct' professional forms of leadership within a New Public Management version of a chief executive are reflected in a report on the competencies of primary school principals (Education Review Office 1996). Although this report acknowledges a dual role of professional leadership and management, the emphasis is firmly placed on technical, task oriented responsibilities for principals:

> managing the day to day operation of their school, putting into practice the board's policies on managing curriculum, managing teacher and student activities, maintaining school property and managing finances(pp.5-6).

The report compares principals and senior public servants, stating that both are "responsible for implementing government policy and managing state funds and assets" (p.8). Principals are then linked with business managers:

> The bottom line for a manager of a business is profit and staying in business. The bottom line for a principal is roll numbers and keeping the school viable... Just as the shareholders of a private company may withdraw their capital if the firm performs badly, so may parents withdraw their child if the school performs badly (p.9).

The view that competition (with parents exercising 'choice' through exit) is the best way to improve schools has been widely criticised within concerns about the socially unjust effects of the imposition of market models of education (see, for example, Codd 1993b, Gordon 1994b, Lauder et al 1994, O'Neill 1996b). However, in the debates about the role of management and leadership in the education 'market', issues around gender inequalities have slipped into the background (apart in a few feminist analyses such as Court 1994a, Strachan

---

[1] Although in education there has been justified criticism of the manipulative potential of 'imposed collegiality' (Smythe 1991, Southworth 1993), there have also been findings that shared decision making and collaborative management styles are significant factors in the development of effective schools (OECD 1990, Ramsay et al 1991, Capper 1994).

1994, 1997, Pringle & Timperley 1995).

This paper aims to draw attention therefore to the experiences and initiatives of some women working in school leadership positions in the new environment. It begins by outlining the current position of women in school hierarchies and giving a brief summary of some of the causes of women's under-representation in school leadership. My on-going ethnographic study of women's primary school co-principalships is then introduced. The remainder of the paper describes how the women principals and boards of trustees I am studying have taken seriously the promises of the reformers in education that parents should have more say in how their children's schools are run. They have exercised what they thought was their right to initiate the kind of flat management models that they wanted. However, as they have sought to establish the co-principalships, significant struggles over meaning and resources have emerged, with varying arguments being articulated around the notion of 'accountability'. To illustrate some of the 'contrary currents' (Wylie 1995) and devolutionary dilemmas that have shaped the beginnings of the primary school co-principalships, I will focus on School A and various stakeholders' views of the shared leadership proposal.

First of all then, what is current position of women in education?

The Marginalising of Women in Educational Leadership

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the patterns in women's under-representation in educational leadership echo those identified in many feminist studies in Western societies. This research has documented how men hold the majority of the leadership positions while most women are placed at the bottom of workforce hierarchies (Chapman 1990, Davies, 1990, Dunlap and Schmuck 1995, Sadker, Sadker and Klein 1991; Ozga 1993, Sampson, 1987; Slyfield 1992,93; Strachan and Duirs 1994; Vasil 1993; Whitcombe 1982). In my country, women currently make up 76% of the regular teaching staff in primary schools, but they hold only 32% of the principals' positions (Boulton and Sturrock 1996). Slyfield's (1992, 1993) analyses of the teaching workforces show that women who are primary school principals, are placed in the smaller one to six teacher schools (Grades 1 - 3), where the principal teaches as well as holds responsibility for the management and professional leadership of the school. Fewer women hold the non-teaching principal positions in the large primary schools: in 1992, only 11% of the Grade 4 schools (6-11 teachers) and 8% of the Grade 5 schools (over 11 teachers) had women principals. In the secondary service, in 1996 women made up 47% of regular teaching staff but only 25% of the principals: only 13% of co-educational secondary schools have women principals. Despite particular initiatives by unions and in EEO legislation, there has been little change in these proportions of women and men in school leadership positions during the last decade (Slyfield 1993, Court 1994a).

Research has identified the broader social and cultural factors underpinning "the reproduction of gendered dominance as a set of power relations" in schools in Western societies (Blackmore 1989:114). These power dynamics have been shown to be hindering the careers and leadership opportunities of many women (Connell 1985, Acker 1989, Al Khalifa 1989, Grant 1989, Limerick and Lingard 1995, Shakeshaft 1989, Adler et al 1993, Malcolm 1978, Neville 1988, Court 1992, Strachan 1991). The assumption of men's values and practices as the norm for leadership has been a significant factor here, with particular masculinist images of leadership and administration becoming "embedded in organisations in subtle innuendos,

images, valuings and languages which exclude many women" (Blackmore 1993:29, Rosetti and Rusch 1995). It has been argued that some women reject moving into educational management as a consequence of what they see as its 'masculinism' and its inappropriate technicist and hierarchical systems of control (Al Khalifa 1989). In Aotearoa/New Zealand, Maori women in particular, and women of ethnic minorities, have been further constrained by the impact in education of institutional racism (McCarthy 1991, Smith 1992, Te Ohu Whakatupu 1993, Johnson & Pihama 1993, Bowkett 1996).

Although the character of gendered leadership images may shift and change over time and place, hegemonic links between dominant forms of masculinity and authority/leadership (Connell 1987, Court 1994b, Prichard 1996, Martin 1996) keep getting reconstructed[2]. Links between 'femininity', nurturance and teaching (Grumet 1988, Aspinwall & Dummond 1989, Bullough & Knowles 1991) seem to have remained a commonsense 'other' side of the picture. Such gendered oppositions have been shown to have contributed to the development of structural factors that have worked against women's advancement[3] (Blackmore 1989). Shakeshaft's (1989) extensive analysis of the research up to the late 1980s has also shown that women who do achieve a position in educational administration are likely to encounter a token status and sexist attitudes towards them. They are further likely to experience a blurring their public and private worlds, as many women's responsibilities in childrearing and caring relationships require complex negotiations of paid and unpaid work (Court 1997a).

It was in the light of these kinds of research findings that Lyn Davies (1990:78) argued, if women's participation and 'stake' in educational institutions is to be increased, "we will probably need a far more flexible, rotational, non-pyramidal style of school administration than is normally the case". She further stated that "such structures should not of course be decided by men in the interests of women; they must be generated by the thoughts and decisions of the women themselves". Leaving aside here questions about why it should be women who require more flexible work arrangements, rather than men[4], to what extent is it possible for women teachers to generate, and then maintain, different structures and ways of working within an educational system that continues to be led mainly by men and within a new market managerialism that many feminists (and pro-feminist men) have argued is masculinist in its rationale and practice (Adler, Laney & Packer 1993, Al Khalifa 1989, Blackmore 1995, Limerick & Lingard 1995, Martin 1996, Collinson and Hearn 1996, Prichard 1996)?

---

[2] Blackmore's (1993) examination of historical constructions of leadership in Australia, shows how these have variously reinforced masculinist notions of a leader as a "benevolent patriarch", the "rational man" and the "multi-skilled manager".

[3] For example, hierarchical bureaucratic chains of control and command have been built into teachers' work relations on the assumption that these are necessary for the co-ordination of subdivided tasks: these have cohered with the development of promotion 'rules' that have benefited male teachers' movement into leadership positions. Length of service has been a bureaucratic requirement for advancement and few men have taken time out of their careers for childcare.

[4] See Sayers & Tremaine (1994) for some discussions of this question.

It is this question that sparked my research into women's innovatory models of shared leadership in middle management (Court 1994c) and now, principals' positions. The following discussion draws on on-going research, so some details may change as the field work and analysis is completed.

The Study: Women's Co-Principalships in Primary Schools

Approach

The study is employing ethnographic methods within a feminist conception of case study (see, for example, Henry 1996). Over the last two and a half years, I have been observing and gathering accounts about the shared principalships in each of the three schools, using 'tracking' interviews and conversations with the principals (at about three month intervals) and board chairpersons, and mainly one off interviews with a wide range of people in the school communities - board members, teaching and support staff, parents and students. This material is being supplemented with information from school documents and observations of school meetings, class lessons and wider activities. Beyond the schools, information about the views of the educational state agencies has been gathered through interviews with personnel in the Ministry of Education and the State Services Commission(the government employing agent for the education sector), and from the specific school review reports from the Education Review Office. Interviews have also been carried out with staff in the NZEI (the primary teachers' union), STA (the School Trustees Association) and NZPF (the New Zealand Principals' Federation). At this stage of the research, field work is completed in School A, and still in progress in the other two.

The Schools

Each of the schools is a small primary, with children from new entrant level to Form 2 (that is aged 5 to 12, 13 years of age). One is a small inner city school, one a Catholic integrated school located in a city suburb, and the other (also located in a city suburb) includes a Montessori strand (2 classes) and a full immersion (Maori language) strand (one class). Throughout the last two and a half years, each of the schools has been fully staffed by women teachers and principals. Although there are some similarities between these three schools, (their female staff, their small size and thus the teaching principal status of their co-principals), there are some marked differences in the communities they serve, and consequently in the school 'mixes' of socio-economic levels and ethnic identification. There are also distinctive organisational culture differences between each of the schools (as well as within the school which has three strands). These factors are yielding rich material for analysis.

This paper discusses the small inner city school, the first of the three to establish a co-principalship. At the time of the research, it had 3 full time teachers and a roll of 64 students, who were predominantly Pakeha (European or white); there were two Maori, 2 Samoan, 1 Chinese and 2 Iranian children attending. The school has a top socio-economic decile rating of 10 and is located in a wealthy middle class area. During 1994-1997, its board members were highly skilled, professional or business people, well endowed with middle class cultural capital. Although they knew quite a lot about how to get 'the system' to work for their

school, as will be shown, the negotiations for establishing the co-principalship were protracted and difficult.

Analysis

In this research, I have been developing my analysis alongside the gathering of the research material and the reading of literature. At this stage typed transcriptions of all the interviews have been sent back to the participants for "member checks" (Lincoln and Guba 1984), with all of these now returned, many with notes about issues seen as significant, as well as indications of any errors and/or sections they do not want me to quote. (For example, there were a few very frank comments about people who disagreed with the board's initial lack of consultation with all parents in the community about whether the school should consider a co-principal application.) During the last six months, I have been discussing with the principals and the board chairpersons the themes around accountability and community that have been emerging as significant, and in this way, my analysis is benefiting from participants' further reflective input. As I write up drafts of the report, I plan to send copies to the participants who wish to read them, and their responses will be incorporated into the discussion.

Initiating the Co-Principalship in One Primary School

Job-sharing: Liz and Terri's Proposal

When School A advertised for a new principal and senior teacher, Liz and Terri applied together, presenting the board appointment panel with their proposal for sharing the two jobs as a co-principalship. These two women had held responsible positions in their previous schools and the wider education service, and although they were not close friends, they had both participated in a reflective principal training course. They had subsequently worked briefly together running a similar middle management course for teachers. They agreed on the importance of shared decision making and collaborative management practice in education (they had read the research about the links between these practices and the development of effective schools). It was a commitment to this approach that gave rise to their joint principalship application.

After reading their CVs and referees reports, the board appointment committee thought either woman would have made an excellent Principal, and later, during the selection process, they wanted to interview Liz and Terri separately. But the women said, "No. It is either the two of us, or nothing". Liz explained to me, "It was about an ideal. We wanted to try out this model which was important to us. We were like a package" (Liz, 9/3/1995:1).

In their written proposal to the board, (Proposal 1992:1), Liz and Terri argued that a shared leadership:

* transforms power from a single to a collective base
* is a structural change that validates a collaborative school culture
* supports a greater degree of consultation and collaboration with the school community
* increases responsibility and accountability of all involved
* depends on collective vision

- acknowledges differences and sameness
- is more likely to be focussed on learning and teaching and less on trends and personality of the leaders
- enhances shared vision which can contribute to high quality learning/teaching

Their proposal also set out for the board (and for review in two years time) their views about particular learning goals for learners and a school management where there was:

> "collaborative planning, shared decision-making and collegial work in a framework of experimentation and evaluation; school self-review; school and teacher development and appraisal systems; parent and community consultation; clear systems of communication and decision-making; monitoring and evaluation of children's progress and people feel welcomed and involved". (Proposal 1992:1).

Liz and Terri's proposal was a conscious "challenge to the structure and the system of management in schools" (Liz 9/3/1995:1). These two women were rejecting a managerialist approach to the co-principalship. They had not developed job descriptions with separate tasks and responsibilities detailed for each of them. Single line accountability was eschewed. Rather than having rules or 'clear guidelines' to avoid possible overlapping of functions and responsibilities, they wanted to be allowed to develop ways of working that would enhance a collective responsibility and a shared approach in as many aspects of the principal's work as possible. They also wanted the collaboration to involve the third teacher in the school, and to be inclusive of support staff and the board of trustees. How this was to happen could not be spelled out in detail as, at that stage, this approach had not been used in any other primary school in the country. Liz and Terri argued though, that priority should be given to establishing systems of communication at all levels: between all staff within the school, between the principals and the board, between staff and parents, between staff and the wider agencies. The two women also stated that regular review should be undertaken, by both the staff and the board, of the structures for communication and organisation as these were developed.

Board of Trustees Response

School A's appointment committee were, in the words of one of them, initially "blown away" by the whole idea of a shared principalship. These three people had had experience in the areas of industrial relations, education research and management and they quickly saw advantages in what Liz and Terri were proposing. These board members shared Liz and Terri's strong commitment "to the best interests of the children" (Mary 31/3/95:8), but they were also very clear that their job

> "was to assess all aspects of the proposal and make the appointment process fair. We opened it up to the whole board, because quite frankly, we didn't know what to do, and we got the board to vote on whether to go ahead with considering this proposal alongside the other single applications" .

Although the whole board approved the consideration of the shared leadership proposal, the mistake of not consulting the school's broader parent community at that stage resulted in some fiery challenges from some parents. During my interviews with parents, board members, teachers and support staff I was told about the "big public meetings and people yelling at each

other and the board. The community was saying we weren't consulted on this. This idea was so new and many had faith in Karen (the third teacher) and wanted her as the new Principal." (Parent 9/3/95:3). Others thought that "there was an injustice in the single candidate being put against two. And a single person might have difficulty working with two coming in" (Parent 10/4/95: 1). When another meeting was held for Liz and Terri to explain their proposal however, most of the doubts were assuaged: in the words of one parent "I softened when I met them and heard them talk about what they were proposing" (Parent 20/4/95:1). Parents in this school community were definitely taking ownership of the selection process for their new Principal, however, and the appointment committee went through some very stressful and personally painful experiences as a consequence of the challenges around this radical new proposal for their school's principalship.

The committee also recognised that there could be industrial problems around a job sharing of the principal's position. While making the decision to appoint Liz and Terri, they were consulting the State Services Commission, the Ministry of Education, School Trustees Association (the school boards' organisation) and NZEI (primary teachers union) about the legal and practical issues. None of the board or the women co-principals realised then the "procedural difficulties we would have to go through to get the co-principalship formalised" (Board chairperson 13/3/95:1). In hindsight, the board chairperson thought that this was because the shared leaadership "is such a significant change for the way we understand management structures to work".

That opinion was illustrated in comments made to me when I interviewed representatives of the following agencies and organisations.

State Services Commission

The legalities around accountability remain a major issue for the Commission. The SSC stresses that the Education Act (1989) defines a Principal as one person. In their view, this is because "there has to be someone who eventually carries the can and takes the ultimate decisions if there's a disagreement... that's accountability, the one who is clearly responsible (Interview 11/12/95:5). The view that "'job sharing' a Principal's position is not within the law" is, of course technically correct. I was told that the Education Act (1989)

> "...talks about the Chief Executive of a state school, of an institution established under this Act. So that indicates to us an individual. And there are responsibilities, like "Subject to sub-section 2, the Principal of a state school may suspend any student." So there are sort of tasks that are given to the Principal and we don't see that the law really allows there to be more than one Principal, to actually legally affect the duties and responsibilities that the Act lays down .... Section 94 talks about um ... "The Board of a state school shall comprise no more than seven and no fewer than three parent representatives, and one Principal" being one. The Principal of the school. (11/12/95:1-2).

Accountability for this person means "that somebody is responsible for something in particular" and if this splitting of responsibilities and tasks does not occur, and these are shared, then there will be "no particular responsibility for anything".

This constraint on the initiating of a shared principalship had been challenged in 1991, however, by the board of Selwyn College (a big co-educational secondary school in Auckland), when that school was investigating the possibility of a co-principalship. A civil rights lawyer, Rodney Harrison (QC), (at that time a Selwyn College board member) saw a loophole in the legislation and proposed that two people could rotate the role. After some lengthy correspondence, the Commission agreed. Consequently it is now possible for schools to use:

> "a rotation situation where you may manage the school in a way where you share responsibilities, but in each year there is one definite person who is exercising the role and responsibility of Principal and is accountable for everything that is done in the name of the Principal. And there's another suggestion that one person is accountable for certain functions and another accountable for other functions. So that is split tasks - there's some kind of certainty then for the staff and the pupils" (SSC spokesperson 11/12/95:3).

The comments which followed are very interesting. The practice of rotating principals is understood as:

> "likely to be unsettling and undesirable from a long-term educational point of view in a school. If you have rotating Principals where one person is actually the Principal for a little while and then the next year there's someone else who's actually the Principal, long-term planning could be a difficulty - a situation could arise where each year there was a complete change in focus in the school" (p.9).

There seems to be little understanding here about how educational leadership and planning actually 'works'. The literature's documenting of the necessity at times for principals to engage in 'firefighting on several fronts', and of the importance of consultative and collegial professional leadership are not reflected in this SSC officer's view of the Principal's role. The comments imply that the principal sits in an office mapping out his/her plan for the school and imposes it without regard to, or knowledge of colleagues' ideas or wishes. In some worst case scenarios of authoritarian management, this may actually happen, but in these times of challenge to such practices, such a principal would not last long without discord in staff relations.

What is worrying in regard to the development of more co-principalships, is that the State Services Commission officer whom I interviewed (an influential person), sincerely believes that when boards ask for information "you do need to provide the Board with the worse case scenarios to enable them to be able to sort out the situation ... And there'll be a lot of Boards then who won't choose to do this". (p.8). It is, of course, really important that boards do understand the potential pitfalls of this model. It is also important to acknowledge that the State Services Commission are concerned about the possibility that "if things went wrong, then the kids are going to suffer" (p.8). However, the Commission spokesperson's lack of understanding about professional culture in schools, and the ways that this is imbued with concern for children's learning and an emphasis on the importance of building positive and supportive learning environments, means that a narrow agency theory and managerialist approach is quite probably shaping responses to enquiries about co-principalships. It is

day by day splitting up of tasks or easy continuity of planning. Single line accountability is also not much help in sorting out who is responsible for a child not learning well when the issue may be one of poor nutrition, or the Ministry of Education's letting out of a playground repair contract for the third week of the school term (rather than in the holidays).

An important point about competency was raised by the STA spokesperson though.

> "If the parent community was concerned about the standard of education, who is actually accountable if it is one of the individuals who is not particularly competent in terms of delivering education. Does the board in that sort of scenario attempt to run a competency on one third of the principalship? It's pretty hard to argue that all three have an equal responsibility when in fact the deficiency is clearly one third of the equation. And that person will feel threatened, and will seek representation you know, and then you know human nature being what it is people will look to their own particular interests. That person will have their union involved and instead of it being the principal's position suddenly we're talking about an individual. So there certainly would be a need to actually make it quite clear where the responsibility actually lay that if for example one part of the principalship was deficient, then the other part which may not be deficient nevertheless is also accepting the responsibility for that deficiency" (STA 3/10/96:6).

In one of the other schools I am studying this issue has arisen, and the responsibility has been seen there as just that, shared. The issue is a complex one though, and one that needs more analysis.

The New Zealand Educational Institute - the primary teachers' union

The national executive of this union had mixed reactions to the co-principal proposal, though I was told in an interview with a union officer that it was generally supported. Benefits were described to me as widening career paths for women, increasing opportunities for people to experience the principalship, supporting collegiality, pooling of people's different strengths and the bringing in of different perspectives. However, this NZEI spokesperson also expressed concerns about

> "what could happen if sharing unravels... It's much more complex than some people realise... and there is a lot of homework to be done, because until all these practical things are sorted out, we cop the mess. Like the Ministry just sort of says, "Here's the problem, you sort it out"." (NZEI interview 11/10/95:3).

Practical worries around salary arrangements were one of the primary concerns. These were not so much the issues about one person who is not working as hard as another, but earning the same pay (a point made by the SSC, reflecting a concern to control exploitation by self-interested individuals). The NZEI official was more focussed on salary difficulties related to industrial conditions of employment, such as how to sort out what happens when one person is on sick leave - does the other person also lose some of their sick leave entitlement? This perceived difficulty seems to be grounded in an understanding of the shared principalship as one position, with its associated employment conditions being split somehow between two

people. (This is not how the contracts have been negotiated, as I explain later).

The concern around salary and employment conditions is linked to the other main worry of NZEI, that the shared principalships could damage career structures. NZEI is opposed to a merging of two career positions, such as the disestablishing of the Deputy Principal position for it to merge into a Co-Principal position. I was told,

> "The two positions must remain separate. This is all tied in to the whole question of bulk funding. It's very easy to break down staffing schedules. It's a hell of a task to get them back up again. The ability to make improvements could be lost forever" (11/10/95:4).

Given the research on proletarianisation and the intensification of teachers' work (see, for example, Apple 1986, Capper 1990, Gordon 1991) this is a significant concern. As this NZEI person continued: "If the Deputy Principal position was disestablished, those tasks would not go away. Someone would have to pick them up - with or without a salary allowance" (p.5).

Negotiating the Contract

Despite the difficulties all these agencies predicted and explored with them, School A's board were not put off. They appointed Liz and Terri and secured their agreement that they would work towards a three way co-principalship with Karen, the third teacher. Discussions with SSC about formalising the shared principalship were difficult and protracted however. During the 18 months it took to get the contracts drawn up, agreed to and signed, the board argued with the SSC that

> "'the principal' is a position - it's structural, and if we take the rhetoric of Tomorrow's Schools at its face value, then schools have the power to fill that position any way they like (Board chairperson 13/3/95:1).

Although the personnel committee thought they had

> "been given devolved responsibility for appointing staff, and after months of work we had come up with a system that we thought would work well, we were told, no, you haven't got all that much responsibility and power. And that was pretty hard" (Jane, board personnel committee 10/3/95:9).

The board had proposed that the school have "three people in the position, and that they would be a third of the Principal and two thirds of a teacher". SSC was adamant however that this couldn't be done, because

> "the Act requires that there be a Principal. The rules said. SSC said no - and quite properly argued case law and precedent which showed the Principal was being interpreted as a person So we backed right off that and said, 'Can we do a rotating scheme like Selwyn does?' And they said 'Yeah. We've got a precedent'... so it was simpler for us to bend the rules rather than trying to have them changed (Board chairperson 9/3/95:4).

This board of trustees took a pragmatic approach. Along with the women co-principals though, they were concerned that the principle (that is, the vision and values) of an equally shared leadership should not be jeopardised. They won an agreement with SSC and the Ministry that the rotating of the Principal's role would not be made public knowledge. It has

only been in the last three months, as the women and the board have realised [as a consequence of the analysis being developed in this research] the wider implications of their concealment, that I have been given permission to discuss the way they established their model. What happened was that School A has:

> "a regime where each of the three people is designated Principal in terms of the staffing schedule for one year and one day. And then it rolls over to the next person. Under the terms of the Collective Employment Contract, you have to have been at the position for a year before you're eligible for a performance pay. (Laugh) It's as simple as that. I mean there's no other reason for it. On the 366th day of their term as Principal, the pay increase takes effect. The only way we've got to adjust salaries is through performance pay on a range of rates. And that's working fine" (Board chairperson 9/3/95: pp.2-3).

A downside that the board chairperson does not identify here is that this arrangement means each of the women becomes eligible for a salary increase only once every three years, rather than every year, as she would be if she was in a single Principal position. The women told me that yes, this is an equity issue. However, they are not in this job primarily for the money, and the salary increments are "such a piffly amount" that it is not worth worrying about. Throughout their negotiations, each of the women Cc-principals was also very aware of the industrial issues raised by NZEI, and the potential for harm to their colleagues career conditions and they were all adamant that they must remain within the NZEI collective contract arrangements. None of them would contemplate an individual contract, even though this may have expedited the negotiations around establishing the shared principalships, and perhaps have advantaged them individually. Their boards could have increased their salaries, for example, without having to stay within the regulations for moving through a set range of rates. Concern for a collective greater good in professional solidarity is clearly evident in their decision, rather than the individual acquisitive self-interest that the reformers of education saw as characterising educational providers (Treasury 1987).

Establishing Their Model

During their first 18 months as Co-Principals, Liz and Terri worked out a three way share with Karen, the remaining teacher in this small school. Although Karen had applied for the Principal's position herself, and at the beginning was not convinced about the viability of a shared leadership, the three women worked closely together to build a strong mutual trust. They began by planning in times for formal professional dialoguing, when they focussed on the development of their shared philosophy for the school as a learning organisation and for a co-operative management approach. As they worked together, they evolved strategies for a completely flat management structure where all three staff were equally sharing the teaching principal responsibilities and accountabilities.

As indicated earlier, right from the beginning Liz and Terri had been committed to the idea of shared leadership and to the need for this to be achieved through structural change. In Terri's words "It's no good just saying we'll make it shared, You had to validate it through structural change. That's the crunch really" (Terri 9/3/95:11). Liz told me "I used to think good principals were charismatic visionaries. I don't think that any more. Vision is important, but no one individual is more important than anyone else. Here the Principal is not a person, it is a position that helps to carry the ideas" (Liz 9/3/95: 6-7). Terri put it like this: "If the

Principal is just one person, they hold the philosophy really, whereas once it's three people, the philosophy is held in the institution. It's held in the people, the fabric of the school, the children and the community, because it can't be held in an individual" (Terri 9/3/95:11). Karen laughingly told me the co-principalship was a bit like a "three-headed monster! Not negatively, but sort of like one organism. Personal agendas got put aside when it came to thinking about major school issues and three became one to carry out the idea. That was how our shared leadership worked. There will other leadership models of course, and this one will evolve, as it needs to now with different people in it" (Karen 3/10/96:5-6).

There is no space to discuss in detail the development of School A's co-principalship, but it has been so successful that when Karen and then Liz left during 1996, the board, in consultation with Terri, decided not to revert to a single principalship. The co-principalship was confirmed as the school's established and preferred management and leadership model. A statement, now included in their charter and sent out to applicants for the positions Karen and Liz had vacated, begins like this:

SHARED MANAGEMENT

School A enjoys and is committed to a Shared Leadership style of management.

Philosophically this involves:

* The transformation of power from a single to a collective base.

* Shared responsibility and accountability.

* A school culture based on consultation and collaboration.

* A collective vision for the school not dependent on trends or the personality of one person.

Shared leadership is not about sharing out the workload or disabling the principal by enforcing 'management by consensus'. Shared Leadership is not necessarily easier, but the combined effort makes it easier to focus on educational and professional goals and not personal agendas".

Gender and Women's Co-Principalships

What part does gender play in the struggles around the initiating of co-principalships in primary schools?

I am making no claims in this study that these women are representative of most primary principals. In fact, as indicated in the early parts of this paper, women are a small minority of primary principals in this country. Nor would I claim that all primary principals who are women would prefer to work in a shared leadership model. Many cultural feminist analyses of women in leadership (such as Loden 1985, Helgeson 1990 for example) have assumed that women (as a group) are naturally collaborative and power sharing (as consequence of their

biology and/or socialisation). This theorising has been widely criticised however, as essentialist. It takes insufficient account of differences between individuals and groups of women and has the effect of comparing (all) women with (white) men (also treated as a group). As I have discussed elsewhere (Court 1997b), there is not a universal 'woman's way of leading': women, like men, lead in different ways, influenced by their values (Weiner 1995), political persuasions (Strachan 1997), personalities (Court 1994b), ethnicity (Pringle & Henry 1993).

It is interesting to note however, that the co-principalship model in primary schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand has been an innovation that has been taken up by women educators, rather than by men. There are currently (to my knowledge) five primary school co-principalships (all women) and two secondary school mixed gender co-principalships (all established since 1991). In all cases but one, the models were initiated by women (and the woman co-principal in that secondary school told me that her male co-principal was "unusual in his ideas about gender equity" (Telephone conversation 12/2/97). This suggests that gendered dynamics are important for an analysis of co-principalships. It also has interesting resonances with research into innovative schools by Ramsay and his colleagues (1991). They found that the women principals they studied were more likely than the male principals to be open to change and innovation, especially in developments around participatory and shared management models.

It would be a mistake to generalise from the Ramsay et al study however. Their finding should not be read in essentialist ways, as meaning, either that all women are collaborative, or that most men in educational leadership are not interested in sharing leadership. In the primary schools I have been studying, skilled male board members have played a significant part in the establishment of the co-principalships. In the two most successful co-principalships, mutually supportive partnerships were developed between the (male) board chairpersons and the (female) co-principals. Here, not only is part of the 'ideal' of parent/professional partnership that was advocated in the Picot Report (1988) eventuating: a significant shift in traditional gender relations can also be seen to be occuring. These men (and many others in this study) are openly admiring of the women principals' skills, professionalism and commitment, and see their role as working to support them. As a consequence, two of the male board chairpersons openly challenged the model of principal appraisal that required them (as they described themselves as 'lay people') to judge the competency of people whom they considered to be far more expert than themselves. There are interesting tensions around these complex positionings of male/female, employer/employee, governor/manager, board member/board member, lay person/professional, parent/teaching principal, appraiser/appraisee, that I wish to analyse.

Under the most recent appraisal guidelines, the requirement for board chairpersons to appraise principals has been broadened. Appraisal of school-wide responsibilities may be delegated to a "contracted consultant" (Ministry of Education 1997:11). This person is not required to be an educational professional, so could be 'generic' management consultant. A whole new 'can of worms' may be opening up here, both in terms of professional issues and gendered issues. As the developing literature on "men as managers: managers as men" (Collinson & Hearn 1996) is showing, managerialism has been constructed within discourses that promote particularly powerful kinds of masculinity that marginalise most forms of femininity and less accepted versions of masculinity. What will need to be watched here is whether hegemonic

managerialist forms of appraisal will construct further barriers for women's (and non-'macho' men's) advancement.

These kinds of gender dynamics around the co-principalships are proving to be an interesting area for my on-going analysis, and for work in the area of feminist theorising of women in educational leadership.

References

Acker, S. (1989) *Teachers, Gender and Careers*, New York: Falmer Press.

Adler, S., Laney, J. and Packer, M. (1993) *Managing Women: Feminism and Power in Educational Management*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Al Khalifa, E. (1989) "Management by halves: women teachers and school management" in H. De Lyon and F. Widdowson Migniuolo (eds) *Women Teachers: Issues and Experiences*, Milton Keynes: Oxford University Press.

Apple, M. (1986) *Teachers and Texts*, New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Aspinwall, K. & Drummond, M.J. (1989) 'Socialised into primary teaching' in H. De Lyon and F. Widdowson Migniuolo (eds) *Women Teachers: Issues and Experiences*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Ballard, R. (1989) 'Tomorrow's schools:dispelling the myths' in *The Daily News*, Taranaki, 3 January.

Blackmore, J. (1989) 'Educational leadership: a feminist critique and reconstruction' in J. Smythe (ed) *Critical Perspectives in Educational Leadership*, London: Falmer Press.

Blackmore, J. (1993) 'In the shadow of men: The historical construction of administration as a masculinist enterprise' in J. Blackmore and J. Kenway (eds) *Gender Matters in Educational Administration*, London: Falmer Press.

Blackmore, J. (1995) 'Breaking out from a masculinist politics of education' in B. Limerick & B. Lingard (eds) *Gender and Changing Educational Management*, Rydalmere: Hodder Education.

Boulton, A. & Sturrock, F. (1996) *Women in the Teaching Service: Education Trends Report*, 8:1, July, Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Bullough, G & Knowles, J. (1991) 'Teaching and nurturing: changing conceptions of self as teacher in a case study of becoming a teacher' in *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 4, 2, pp.121-140.

Capper, P. (1994) *Participation and Partnership: Exploring Shared Decision-Making in*